Cordula Heithausen

Being a Child Again Through Gameplay

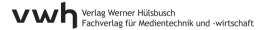


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Table of Contents

	Preface to this book edition	7
1	Introduction	9
I.I	Relatable Characters	9
1.2	Motivation	II
1.3	Objective and Outline	13
1.4	Research Questions	13
2	Game Selection Criteria and Definitions	15
2.I	First Criterion: Playable Child Character	16
2.2	Second Criterion: Significant Child Perspective	17
2.3	Third Criterion: Adult Target Group	18
3	Exploring Games Providing a Playable Child Perspective	19
3.I	Dark Approach	20
3.I.I	Silent Survival	20
3.1.2	Horror Meets Humor	28
3.1.3	Dystopian Realness	34
3.1.4	Dark Approach—Relatability Summarized	38
3.2	Playful Approach	38
3.2.I	Childhood Summers	39
3.2.2	Playful Approach—Relatability Summarized	47
3.3	Blended Approach	47
3.3.I	Imagination as Refuge	48
3.3.2	Observing Childhood Memories	55
3.3.3	Imagination Noir	58
3.3.4	Blended Approach—Relatability Summarized	60
4	Potential Means to Creating	
	a Relatable Child Perspective	63
4.I	Childlike Comprehension and Perception	63
4.2	Childlike Position	65
4.2.I	Avatar Agency	67

Table of Contents

4.2.2	Immersion and Point of View	70
4.3	Projection Surface vs. Individual Experience	80
4.4	Nostalgia and Retro	82
5	Conclusion	87
	Appendix: Practical Thesis Project: BackSeat Game Prototype	89
A.ı	Game Idea and Design Vision	89
A.i.i	Game Objective	90
A.I.2	Prototyping	90
A.1.3	Game Structure and Mechanics	90
-	Game Narrative	91
_	Game Aspects Aimed at Child Perspective Relatability	92
	Game Visuals	94
A.I.7	Game Audio	96
A.2	Game Development	97
	Development Roadmap	97
A.2.2		98
_	Game Mechanics and UI	100
	Game Dialog Mini Games	I0I I02
	Game Assets	102
A.3	Outlook	104
-	Expansions and Improvements	105
-	Beyond the Prototype	106
A.3.3	Additional Play Modes	108
A.4	Concluding Thoughts	109
	References	111
	Bibliography	III
	Ludography	113
	Filmography	114
	Software	114
	Images	115

Preface to this book edition

Admittedly, studying a second time was the last thing on my mind after I had just concluded my years as a doctoral researcher and left the engineering path altogether driven by a growing creative urge. And when on my search for a new path in the entertainment industry I stumbled across a master program in game development, I considered this merely an interim solution. Games have always had a place in my heart and contributing to their creation was an idea I liked to indulge in—despite my inexperience obstructing its actual realization. However, it was not until I became a student again that I came to truly apprehend, appreciate and enjoy the history, theory and thought behind interactive media.

And finally, when it was time to come up with a master thesis topic, I connected my passion for games with the time of my life when it first emerged and delved into in-game childhoods. I explored the child perspectives an adult player can adopt through gameplay and the effect these might have on them. I further tried to gather and theorize the means to create a relatable child perspective and —as practical research—developed the game prototype *BackSeat*, intending to convey a childlike experience of a family car ride.

Throughout the research, writing and game development of my thesis, I was guided by Prof. Dr. Gundolf S. Freyermuth and Prof. Dr. Hanns Christian Schmidt who I extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to. It was a demanding and exciting time that I am very thankful for as it extended my enthusiasm for the language of games to areas previously unnoticed by me.

I am further thankful and delighted that I have been given two opportunities to share the outcome of my work with interested readers. First, I had the honor to contribute a chapter to the book *Playful Materialities*. *The Stuff That Games Are Made Of* by editors Hanns Christian Schmidt, Gundolf S. Freyermuth, Benjamin Beil and Raven Rusch. And now, with this book, a slightly adapted version of my original thesis becomes available in print, hopefully finding its way to fellow game enthusiasts and any other curious person with a soft spot for childlike playfulness. I am excited about this and would like to thank my publisher Werner Hülsbusch for reaching out to me in the first place.

I hope you enjoy this book. Maybe afterwards, you even feel inspired to let a game carry you back to being a child.

Copenhagen, January 2023 *Cordula Heithausen*